

Constantin Popescu, Alexandru Taşnadi,
Respiritualizarea. Învăţă să fii om,
ASE Publishing House, Bucureşti, 2009, p. 428

Reviewed by Benjamin COTIGARU*

Respiritualization. Learn to be a Man is a dream defining the century of Human Family – an organic part of “all livings.”³³ While the authors of this book call this *dream human and institutional respiritualization*, J. Rifkin³⁴ points out in his book *The European Dream*, the second dawn of the Enlightenment, about which Romano Prodi says that “it reflects the European soul, showing us who we are, what values to uphold and to what we aspire in the new Europe.”

As a result of the new perception of the human existence essence as a *responsibility of meaning*, the dream of Constantin Popescu and Alexandru Tasnadi – Professors at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, is built on two pillars of the new holistic paradigm that is centred upon the “health of all living things”³⁵.

The first pillar of human and institutional respiritualization is seen by both authors in terms of *love* – as the most profound imperative of human life which

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³³ According to the two authors, the concept of „all livings” stands for an assembly of „integrated wholes” to which the natural environment and the artificial one made up of communities, families, organizations and institutions also belong (to see Constantin Popescu, *Raţionalitate şi Speranţă. Paradigma întregului viu*, Renaissance Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006)

³⁴ Rifkin, J., *Visul European. Despre cum, pe tăcute, Europa va pune în umbra „visul american”*, Polirom Publishing House, 2006

³⁵ Both authors suggest to extend the concept of human health to other organic components of all livings, such as: natural environment, communities, families, organizations and institutions. As a result, we can talk about environment health, community health, organization health, family health and institution health.

includes all the positive feelings manifested in Human Family, under the form of appreciation, admiration, respect, gratitude, confidence etc. Love is that kind of feeling that gives positive effect to our choices and integrates them in our own area of consciousness where “each individual is questioned by life,” says Dr – Viktor E. Frankl – and he, in his turn, can answer only answering life for his own life; only being responsible, individuals can give an answer to life itself “³⁶.

According to the two authors mentioned above, the second pillar of human and institutional respiritualization is the *scientific knowledge* under the form of self-discovery and knowledge of the world where we coexist and succeed each other. By respiritualization of the scientific knowledge, we get a deep meaning necessary to the transition from “knowledge is power” to “knowledge is wisdom”, which, as well as the two authors consider, stands for a paradigm shift as a result of human and institutional respiritualization.

Only through love and scientific knowledge, as the two professors state, an individual can free himself, he can use a part of society built up inside himself, under the form of values acquired during his first years of life, similar traditions, culture of respect and knowledge on behalf of the life fulfillment- life lived in community, work based on social division and love helping you improve your happiness.

As part of the top contemporary debates according to which the current global crisis is a “complex, multidimensional crisis” with obvious influences on every aspect of our lives – health and livelihood, environmental quality and social relations, economy, technology and practice ... a crisis with intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions...³⁷, the authors of Respiritualization... think that “progress and prosperity through the rich diversity of life either natural and human or social and spiritual stand for the goal of respiritualization.... As a whole, respiritualization is a path to enlightenment of human being, as it stands for a cosmic being at the level of all livings.”³⁸

Trying to build the area of interest of the concept of respiritualization, the authors place its source inside *the cry of consciousness*, where the whole evolution of our common coexistence and succession is built. Designed as a light of freedom responsibility to be an organic part of “the integrated ones” according to the law

³⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, Meteor Press, Bucharest, 2009, p. 121

³⁷ Fritjof Capra, *Momentul adevărului*, Tehnică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p.3

³⁸ Constantin Popescu, Alexandru Tașnadi, *Respiritualizarea. Învățã să fii OM*, ASE Publishing House, București, 2009, p. 428

“All is one, One is the one, One is All and Everything is All”, respirationalization envisages that cry of consciousness that aims to “rebuild the values in the spirit of which we live, work and love, to rebuild education considering any possibility of shaping individual as expert and not that kind of expert situated above individual’s natural possibilities, to put precious on ethics more than on the use of technology, the morality of wealth before its benefits ... the fulfilment of human beings under the sign of being in organic contact with to have. It is the human richness that becomes morality and the ethics related to the concept “to have.”³⁹

Considering the two professors’s opinion, respirationalization is the defining element that builds love and scientific knowledge, putting them in harmony with the imperatives of human life in society, the requirements of health related to all livings. In the book, the two authors give Mrs. Golda Meir’s answer to the question what characterises Jewish people: she replies that the whole wealth of her country is its spirit. She goes on saying that it is the spirit of her people the most treasured fortune of Israel and if people happen to lose their spirit, then not even the United States of America could save them.⁴⁰

At the same time, the spirit of respirationalization implies *the return to the values on which the harmony between love, science and faith in the certainty of hope is based*. Love without knowledge is blind as scientific spirit, while knowledge across the borders of love may become destructive. Without any meaning, both may come into harmony, being independent, but organic at the same time, the human mind only on the grounds of faith under the certainty of hope. The authors of respirationalization, just like Allan Bloom, emphasise that a crisis of the university- where there is the home of our reason, is actually a crisis of human as a cultural being. It explains why what man has in his natural environment is nothing compared to what he acquired from culture.⁴¹

By human respirationalization, professors as Constantin Popescu and Alexandru Taşnadi suggest a new return to culture as a supreme expression of human’s creativity, as a bond that gather people in a group of roots, based on customs, styles, tastes, rituals etc.

Like Allan Bloom, the authors of human and institutional respirationalization see in the culture based on love, knowledge and creativity the foundations of

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 427

⁴⁰ Quoted after Constantin Popescu and Alexandru Taşnadi, quoted works, p. 329

⁴¹ Allan Bloom, *Criza spiritului american*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 226

human dignity⁴², that form of human community through which the harmony between art and life becomes is achieved. The respiritualization suggested by the two professors is the model of restoration through Romanian culture values that are born by love, knowledge and faith in the certainty of hope.

Paraphrasing on Kaiserling, the authors of human and institutional respiritualization have got the wisdom that if people wanted to improve the external conditions of life, then a necessary attention should be given to the inner human side⁴³ where the most mysterious human powers exist and react: *the power of mind, the power of the heart and the power of soul*. Conditioning the human and institutional respiritualization in terms of fulfilment of human life in society, the authors of the paper we are interpreting believe that humanity places itself in the deepest crisis of cultural education.

From this perspective on the role of school, they are supporters of the Nobel Laureate in Medicine, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi. So, school must, first, teach us how to learn, to awaken our thirst for knowledge, enjoy the satisfaction for a well done thing and the excitement of creation, we learn to love what we do and helps us discover what we'd like to do.⁴⁴

Considering the respiritualization of education, the authors of the paper on which we are focused, to make it popular and well understood, suggest that education should turn school into a *train of cultural development, a partner in the process of making decision, as well as in the transfer of scientific culture into social practice, in institutional responsibility to fulfil human life as part of society*.

Conceiving real education from the perspective of human life fulfilment, the authors of human and institutional respiritualization believe that the reconstruction of education on the meaning of life is a complex process of extremely human openness, which is the responsibility of human communities which regards education as the most important thing towards which the society should direct, uniting the meaning of the past with the future requirements, facing up the contradictions of present times.

Whether good or bad, a book cannot help you if you do not read it. If you read it, it certainly helps you even if it is bad or good. In both cases, you have something to learn. In both cases learning is a benefit. In this book, the authors say

⁴² Ibidem, p. 223

⁴³ Albert Szent-Györgyi, *Pledoarie pentru viață*, Politică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1981, p. 208

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 134

that it would be efficient or desirable that people should learn from positive experiences, the common and scientific knowledge, and the wisdom that runs through the area during our common faith in the certainty of hope. It appears that individual and society in general are taught a lesson especially when the evils happens. If we consider that we live a life that means 10% of what happens to us and 90% of how we react to what happens to us, means that most of what we learn is about us, about what could positively or negatively affect our lives.

Regarding the reality of our common coexistence and succession, the harmony of all living, as the authors say, under all their various forms, is given by complementary parts: the good individual with the bad one, the tall one with the short one, the clever one with the stupid one, the active fool with the passive fool, the fat one with the thin one, the strong one with the weak one, the beautiful one with the ugly one, the great one with the small one, the healthy one with the sick one, the rich one with the poor one, the active corrupted with the passive corrupted etc.

These organic parts of any all livings, say the authors, the human individual, organisation, community, family, natural environment, institution etc., are under the magnifying lens paradigm by which we perceive, know them and understand them, or we relate to them. This lens is the human mind, formed during our first seven years of life, when one sets the basic core values that are meant to define our being, character within the *institutional school*, where society through knowledge defines a particular model of education challenging human brain in a productive way within the school of productive employment, when people show their faith in “to have”, or “to be” at the *school of the sunset life*, when people share their experience acquired along the years as a result of living in a *life transition* school when each individual faces up an unique and irreversible experience.

The book that we intend to analyse “*Respiritualization. Learn to be a man*” is written as a dialogue between them and through them, with a number of “beautiful minds” that coexist in society, the substance of which is based on representative works of science and faith, physics, medicine, psychology, economic, sociology, anthropology, religion, philosophy and politics etc.. From the beginning, we want to say that the *principles of spiritualization* are under the sign of the new paradigm which the authors have called it “health of all livings”.

By respiritualization, the authors suggest that there is a change in the common sense of our common evolution towards a wrong direction. The world in

which we should live, work and love – as imperatives of transition through human life, as the physician Alfred Adler used to call them – is *dehumanised* and *disoriented*, as evolution of meaning, is in a Great Depression, which seems the worst in history. As we have said and as the authors of respiritualization stated, this crisis is a spiritual crisis, a crisis of cultures generated by the deep meaning of the two leading concepts “to have” and “to be”.

Founding respiritualization on the authentic values, the authors perceive this inner substance that helps us keep our identity and fulfil our life from many points of view. Alan Bloom would say that a value is not a value if it does not enhance life. Quasy-totality of human values consists of less or more fade copies of the initial values⁴⁵. By human respiritualization, our teachers pay attention to the fact that there has been a split between love, science and faith in the certainty of hope, which resulted into a gap between us and the fulfilment of human life from the perspective of “to be”.

The studies emerging *on the new holistic paradigm* with some *holonomic nature*, as well as the religious, sociological and anthropological researches highlight the fact that people have produced with their hands, mind, but also with other human powers, *a kind of progress that is threatening them!*⁴⁶ On the other hand, the authors say, like other scientists of good faith, that people have directed scientific knowledge and wisdom to the area of exploring people and the environment where they coexist, their space in order to use these results for the fulfilment of human life in society, release from pain and provide of food, housing, training and development of cultural identities that come naturally placed on the table of bio-social diversity of meaning development.

Quating a Nobel laureate in medicine, the authors say *that if it were to take all that mankind has from scientific knowledge, it would make to bring it back to the Stone Age and civilisation would collapse.*⁴⁷

Moreover, the same remarkable results of scientific knowledge, as the authors of this book admit, have been used to destroy all livings’ life- the life of people and human communities, natural environment, families and institutions, organisations etc. The systemic pollution, the cosmo- technical arming, the global poverty, the uncontrolled over-morality for millions of people and the under

⁴⁵ Allan Bloom, quoted works p. 239

⁴⁶ To see Pope John Paul II, *Encyclicals*, ARCB Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 34-38

⁴⁷ To see Albert Szent- Györgyi, quoted works, p. 174

consumption threatening millions of people show that man now has at his disposal as a result of scientific knowledge, cosmic energy to which people are not normally accustomed.

With some of these energies, people could destroy all living over three times, as if once it would not be enough! The current global crisis, as the physicist Fritjof Capra says, *The Moment of truth*, highlights a serious spiritual work: *the world lost its compass*. In fact, what did it lose? The fundamental values, in which we live, work and love each and all together, within the segment of human time which people have at their disposal. Thus, we arrived, to be afraid, as Pope John Paul II used to say, that the results of the hands and minds might turn against life as a living whole.

Respiritualization, as the authors of the book state, is the cry within us which should arouse the phenomenon of consciousness, that metanoia able to produce change from within to outside life. From this perspective, the authors say the society in which we live is not a scientifically knowledge-based society, because so far now human evolution has been common to the use of scientific knowledge.

What should the century we entered mark in terms of human and institutional spiritualization? The entry of human society in the era of *practical responsibility for the use of scientific knowledge and the certainty of faith in hope from the perspective of all livings' health* made up of natural environment, people, human communities, organisations, families and institutions.

A survivor of Nazi camps, Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, said that life implies especially to be responsible, the responsibility itself being the very essence of human existence.⁴⁸

In the two authors' opinion, spiritualization, as internal transformation process through which people learn to be human must include *education*. We need at a global scale, another programming model of human brain which should proceed from the understanding that true education must serve the fulfilment of human life in society, the real life as work based on social division and as love render us real human beings.

However, so far now, education has pursued to become factors of production, depending almost exclusively on career, as if we rendered our children work factors!

⁴⁸ To see Viktor E. Frankl, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, Meteor Press Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 121

Respiritualization of education does not exclude training people in the spirit of worship work quality, but learning how to appreciate those people's education, who produce and seriously pollute the natural environment, who have as the main priority "to have" driven by greed, who use scientific knowledge to produce weapons of destruction, full of life, spending over \$ 3 billion a day, while human health, communities and institutions spend far more on!

The authors are convinced and demonstrate with arguments that education is on the wrong way at a global scale. Therefore, its spiritualization has to mean putting the fundamental values of life at the foundation of human mind in a free and democratic society. *Terra, a wise saying said, has enough resources to feed everyone. Unfortunately, it does not have sufficient resources for human greed!* Not to mention that the most important human resources, are used for cosmo-technical arming and not for education and public health!

Freedom, responsibility, human solidarity and social communion are considered fundamental values of education spiritualization which implies that education is meant to fulfil human life in society. Excessive reliance on work or career is even worse than drug addiction because people seem to forget to live and love. People, as professionals, work to fulfil their own life and do not live just to work!

Work is, indeed, a fundamental cornerstone of life in society, but only one of them; at the same time, there are also another two ones – life lived in community and love that only together give life a well-built meaning. In fact, the authors say, quoting Alfred Adler⁴⁹, humans are created with such organs such as eyes, hands, mouth and ears only to adjust themselves as social being, which is the key of a fulfilled life. How smart is human nature, how smart are our all livings of which we are an organic part!

The authors propose that in all forms of education, pupils and students, regardless of specialized training, should be able to choose to learn subjects of "spiritual package", such as music, literature, painting, dance, gardening, etc., particularly useful for the fulfilment of a life, work and love in all stages of transition through life, including the sunset of life. And all these happen in spite of the fact that love and knowledge are human factors of competitiveness.

In the book, we meet the proposal to extend the concept of human's health to all components of all living humans, communities, families, organisations,

institutions and natural environment. And this because they are designed as living organisms, parts of the whole.

For example, *at the level of business organisations, instead of economic efficiency people should use the concept of health of organisations*, the concept being approached both in terms of profitability and in terms of the health of employees, the urban or rural communities health, where that respective organisation is situated, the health of families working in that respective enterprise, the health of institutions governing the games or the health of environment. As a result, an organisation is healthy and effective, but not every organisation is efficient and healthy. Our universities, as living organisms, must be healthy. This means that the values of the academic organisation must serve to the fulfilment of human life in terms of freedom and responsibility.

At the foundation of human and institutional respiritualization, the authors place a number of principles arising from health requirements of all livings considering the “win – win” principal, instead of the “win – loss”, the harmony between economic rationality and hope in life instead of the rationality of absolutization through the market, the guarantee of a healthy economic growth instead of undifferentiated, growth, the use of human indicators in assessing the macroeconomic results, the shift from competition among people in human competition with themselves, the rethinking of education in terms of functions of the intelligent human self and the development of the capability of looking for happiness instead of transforming people in production factors depending on career and the understanding that it is uncertainty that define the game of life in society.

In the field of economic education, the authors, for the first time, propose projects on the *oath of professors of Economics and economists*, these two interpretations being going to be discussed and integrated in an operational system that would result in appropriating consequences in terms of economic education respiritualization.

The fact that the ideas of the book were released and discussed within prestigious communities and organizations of high spirituality of Cluj-Napoca, Targu-Mures, Targoviste, Ploiesti, Curtea de Arges, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Targu-Jiu and Bucharest by participation of some personalities from the economic, social, political, religious, academic etc. shows that we are facing up some reflections on a complex phenomenon that requires formation of nuclei of human and institutional

⁴⁹ Alfred Adler, *Sensul vieții*, Irl Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 201

respiritualization. It is necessary to elaborate acts and deeds necessary for the transition to transform the reality we live in, by changing from inside the way people perceive and relate to the world they live in, work and love. By spiritualization, *the authors suggest to return to the harmony of love and knowledge of science, between science and faith in the certainty of hope.*

The book leaves open debates on issues that are only listed, or less argued, such as community health, organization health, family health, environmental health and institutions, the complementarity principle “deserve the love of your neighbor” with the principle “love your neighbour as yourself⁵⁰”, the introduction of the principle of hope in economic science with the principle of rationality etc.

The value of the book, as we also consider, is that it succeeds to raise a number of problems for human and institutional spiritualization, starting from the spiritualization of education in an organic connection with science and the faith in the certainty of hope, from the perspective of harmony necessary to the transition in the century we are facing up, to a new era, that of practical responsibility for the health of all livings, replacing the principle of “knowledge is power” with the principle of “knowledge means wisdom”.

Conceived from the perspective of the new paradigm of all livings, the book also raises the issue of the spiritualization of economic science, policies and economic mechanisms of everywhere, starting from the principle that economy – as an environment created by man, should not be conceived to be but a living organism, part of the social organism, being also integrated in the micro-cosmos of our organism which is not only alive, but also aware of its position. As a result, economy is an alive organism, healthy or sick.

Spiritualization fights for the acute organic necessity of making individual better inside of him. His inner side is the place where the proper attitudes necessary to fulfil life under uncertainty circumstances are shaping themselves.

This book, if it is read, or more, understood, makes us quite aware of the problems of life lived in a community, the work we perform and the love we feel. It simply makes us think whether or not we are real people.

To conclude, we would like to suggest the reader to experience the space of the two authors from *Respiritualization – as a necessity*, opened by the high spirit academician – Gheorghe Păun, to *the Windows opened towards hearts*, from Platon’ vision, to the *Fascination of complementary biology*, based on nature and

society inside individual, to the interaction between *Living and survival*, the point where the true laws of coexistence and succession meet, to *Respiritualization – as a changeable thing*, from the perspective of the health of all livings, made up by people, communities, families, organisations and institutions, to the *Calls for Freedom*, inquired by our own nature revolution, to the *Challenges of economic education*, as a cry for the health of public and private business, to the *Undoubted reserves* where there is the consciousness of the truth about who we are, to the *Examination through self assessment*, when people are seized with their own assessment in terms of transition of meaning, to the *Spirituality of living*, as an alternative between „to have “ if „, to be”, to *Faith in the certainty of hope*, when freedom serves life fulfilment, to *Metanoia that purifies*, where there is the spirit of revolution in terms of expectations, to *Competition with themselves*, through which people build up the beauty of winning together with great sacrifice, to *The flowers of respiritualization in blossom everywhere*, the place where people learn to dream or hope, and understand that gratitude is the healthier human emotion which accomplish our transition through life.

As any beginning has an end, our interpretation is meant to reflect not of what the book says, but of who you are, what do you want from life, or what life wants from you, the fact that the transition through human life is unique and has an irreversible course that puts its stamp on the family spirit in which you were born, the community where you lived in, the country where you have survived or fulfilled the faith you have hoped of.

Considering the importance of the issues approached by the two professors mentioned above, we suggest that both authors and the publishing house should explore the possibility of translating the book into an international language so that the ideas expressed may enter in the circuit of contemporary debates.

⁵⁰ To see Hans Selye, *Știință și viață*, Politică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1984, pp. 364-365